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Fall 2001

PARNIASSUS

PARNASSUS

Inter-Arts Magazine
of Northern Essex Community College
Haverhill, Massachusetts 01830

Parnassus is the name of the
mythological mountain home of
the nine muses who inspired
humankind in the arts.

The policy of the editorial staff has been to select material for the magazine democratically.

We have read each work submitted and viewed all artwork.

We voted to determine eligibility: a majority vote for a piece meant publication.

Parnassus provides an opportunity for new artists and writers to reach others;
it's a showcase of Northern Essex Community College student creativity.

PARNASSUS PROFILE

JENNIFER DICKERT
FRONT AND BACK COVERS

Jennifer Dickert, is pursuing an Associate's Degree in General Studies and Graphic Design here at Northern Essex. She explains, "The single most important thing I have learned by going to college is that I can do anything well if I just slow down and take my time with it." Jen sets high standards for herself in both her work as a college student and in her work as an artist: "Graphic design suits me very well because it is a real discipline-You must be meticulous in your work to be successful. There is no room for sloppiness. I love that sort of thing." When people view her artwork, she wants people to "think about things in a new light." In short, she says, "I seek to enlighten, to inform, and to get the gears of the intellect going." This commitment to intellectual artistic expression shines through in both of Jen's cover illustrations. The provocative artworks were inspired by an assignment in her illustration class. To create her illustrations, Jen used black contact paper, illustration board and an Exacto Knife. The front cover is a portrait of the Icelandic singer, Björk. Jen explains, "I love the Björk one because I love to work with contrast to produce images that make you stop and take notice ... I want people ... to examine it over and over to find the emotion, the energy, the expression captured." The back cover, a portrait of Helena Christiansen, is also full of energy and expression. "With Helena," Jen explains, "I like the mystery of the human form. Not everything is visible but your mind fills it all in." Many artists, including Van Gogh, Karel Appel, and William Bouguereau, inspire Jen. Her favorite graphic designer is her friend, Jason Zada, "one of the most creative people [she] has ever met." Jen's future plans remain a work-in-progress because she is multi-talented and has varied interests in medicine, nutrition, art and graphic design. Whatever her future holds, Jen explains: "I hope to be successful in what I am doing, have someone to love, drive a BMW Z3, and be surrounded by lots and lots of cats!"





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ESSENCE

My mother paints a portrait of
A statue that stands among
Plants and a tree.

The girl has pony tails,
Short shirt, protruding stomach;
Beautiful little girl.

Or could it be
That her statue
Stands among time;

Essence of time.

The girl is loved. She
Has hopes and dreams,
Of becoming one with the future.

She is made of stone.
Stone comparable
with the stillness of time;

Essence of time.

(Sandra Thompson

TRUTH

Another glass of Absinthe
to push it all under
too much time preparing for
you to say it's over
again and again and again
until I give up on you
give up on me
give up on everything
until I find something sharper
than your oh so gentle words
All I ever wanted was this
Because nothing felt so right
but that's what I get
for Loving anything at all
and admitting to myself
that I am not that cold

I am that cold
I am bitter
Jaded
Cynical
Starving
Not because of you
or what you whisper in my ear
but because I let myself think
that I could be happy
just once

) Dan Lyons

You can feel it coming.
It reverbrates through your being like a thousand symphonies
It approaches like a peal of thunder
Coursing through you like a lightning strike.
You can hear it in your soul.
A song of bliss, sung by all Heaven's Host
A note unmatched by the saddest violin,
 but can be found in the laughter of a child
A tune like that of Creation's Song.
You can taste it in the air.
A tang like the sweetest orange.
You see it all around you.
The flowers splash of color
The gleam of a smile on a stranger's face
The cascading, slow rainbow in a sunset.
All of this, it is,
It reaches from the dawn of time
 to the end of eternity
Touching your soul,
 holding you in its arms the entire way.
And it has a name.
Its name is Life.
Its name is Love.
And it is all yours.

(Bryan Burns-Fedele

EL PUENTE
Maria Lucia Cortina



DEFINITELY, OH MAN

An equation to keep you puzzled?
dig deep, don't miss
step on out

A grievance with a ruler?
press, oh so hard
with a twist

I'll be much better, later.
an escape in mind
let blood let

No fear of your own!
then reach the shore
carrying freedom

And the review of my senses seems to come forth, while
nearing the water's edge.
In the closing moments of the play, there's little
time for observation, or reflection of the past, as is
connection with the future.

(Dik Bizarro

OH MAN! Thou hast come
into the world to make
profitable business of dealing
with the merchandise of Naam
which never fails. But alas thou
art engaged in fruitless and
bewildering things of life. The
night of earthly life is nearing
its end. Those who do not reach
the shore now, how can they
cross when dead?

NOTE:

Oh Man! = Words from a Hindu affiliated religion.

Naam: A sort of step towards heaven.

If not for the Modder, Thomas thought as he picked at the concrete, "If not for that it'd be fine. Well, maybe not fine, but I could cope for Christ sake." Thomas looked down and wondered how long he could have been sitting there. He stopped picking at the concrete. Reaching behind him, he fished a tattered green rag of a handkerchief out of his back pocket and wrapped it around his hand. It was bleeding from underneath the fingernails.

Thomas rose, smoothing the front of his suit as if wiping oil from his hands, and swayed left-toward Fifth. He had only walked about five steps before it occurred to him that Fifth was empty. In fact, the whole lower quarter was empty. From the river up through Central Ave. the darkness blanketed the streets. Turning-round Thomas had a fond memory of the alley off Fifth where Seven-slicks had had horns till four and nothing but wine. He remembered the time he first descended the scarlet staircase and was intoxicated by the syrupy smell of bad wine and the salvation of Slick's bar-cords. He remembered the girl at the bar and her embarrassed smile when he told her the rose on her blouse only diminished her natural looks; though it was the prettiest flower he'd seen in years.

Thomas remembered thinking that her face held the tragedy perfectly. He could tell she was beautiful once, but the on-set of the Creep owned her now. Though clearly in the early stages, the diagnoses was quite clear on account of the sunken eyes and the green hew of her skin. In the others he'd seen at that point, the Creep was simply devastating. Their faces, as the lives behind them were lost-forgotten, displayed nothing but hopeless anguish. Yet, the sad look on this young woman's face was less pitiful than sympathetic. It was as if the fatalism her condition bestowed on her had carried with it a certain security that the uninfected had not; and she pitied them their constant uncertainty. Indeed it was not fear nor melancholy lamentation that kept this face so drawn as to be unreadable. It was simpler than that. It was boredom, that dreadful sense of ennui that makes both past and future irrelevant in the eternal face of the moment at hand.

For a long time, the dignity the image of this girl represented had inspired Thomas as much as he reckoned was possible during such an epidemic. The glimpse he

held portrayed her face as if the scarlet light of Seven-slicks had suspended it above the blank ruin of the city-- the light lending to it the look of epic tragedy, of a lost splendor, and the individual effort to rise above the decay of the surrounding world-- be it moral or psychical. For months, Thomas thought at least, that solemn face remained with its sharp features, meticulous nose, high cheekbones, and a mouth that Renoir could not hope to flatter. But now all he could remember was Fifth Street and the scarlet staircase. Even after sitting down and smoking a cigarette, Thomas could not call the girl's face and its once irreproachable dignity into being. And once again his eyes slowly began to focus on the slick roadside mud, following the curving rivulets of grime as they wound from sidewalk to sewer.

As Thomas was lighting another cigarette he saw something waving and fluttering like tiny dove's wings in the gutter. He got up, went to the curb, and picked up a soiled, weather-beaten pamphlet. Thomas turned the pages until he found what he thought was the beginning. Though the pages were wrinkled and the majority of the ink had bled, he recognized the blurry title and repeated it several times the way one repeats an answer that, once given, seems so simple. **Spyro-Crypting Psychosis**-. "The Creep," Thomas said aloud as he squinted and squeezed the bridge of his nose. The pamphlet was the first formal response the government had made to the epidemic, and had been released (he thought at least) just after the night he saw the girl in Seven-slicks and before the city had been closed off and barricaded-an irreproachable fortress to those who wished to visit, a padded cell for those who were already there. It told of the bacteria, how its transmission was inevitable on account of its being an airborne pathogen, and of its effects. Though he knew all too well what was to be said, Thomas sat and flipped open the pamphlet.

Spyro-crypting Psychosis is a strain of bacterium affecting the central nervous system of the human body. After a minor gestation period, the bacteria spread into the host's brain and colonize the nerve cells.

From this point, it is estimated the patient will loose all memory except that which is associated with manual tasks within three months.

The disease, it seems, advances quickly while one sleeps.

The physical affects are disfiguring. Patients lose skin tone and are noted to develop dark rings around the eyes due to the consequent lack of sleep associated with the infection.

The infection indiscriminately results in death within two years.

The reason for this remains unknown to date.

Thomas crumpled the pamphlet into a little ball and threw it back in the gutter. He wondered why he hadn't been infected? Why was he made to carry not only the memories of a rather unsuccessful life, but also the horrible images of the city as it fell victim to the epidemic? Why had he alone been made to endure the loss of an entire city, the transformation of a passionate metropolis into one of fatal complacency-- of empty people who walked like zombies to and fro with no understanding of why and no desire to do otherwise? These were the questions that dominated Thomas's daily thoughts; that left him a disparaging insomniac wishing for a death that would once again reunite him with his fellow men (or this is what he had been telling himself lately). He felt a great need to speak with someone who still remembered, but couldn't think of anyone to call on. How was this possible, had he truly lasted this long without a single sympathetic soul or had all those he knew fallen victim and taken that long ride on the Modder, the ride to the end of the line?

Bewildered and exhausted, Thomas found his way back to the stoop he had been sitting on, climbed the stairs, and fumbled for a moment with the lock. Inside he passed an old couple sitting on a rust-orange couch. He made a motion to wave, but the couple just stared with glazed eyes at the corner of the room. Their eyes were sunken, their skin gray and Thomas stood for a moment feeling the detached pity one encounters upon gazing at the misfortune of strangers. Reaching the top of the third flight of stairs, he paused in mid-step as if thinking of something, turned, and once again began fumbling a key into the lock on the doorknob at his waist.

Thomas threw his keys on a table and sat down on the couch. He gazed around the room, but at nothing in particular. His stare eventually made its way to the window. He sat complacently and watched dust particles rise and fall, caught up in miniature thermals stirred by a sliver of midday sun that had broke through the constant cloud cover and made its way through Thomas's window. After a few minutes, he fell into the quiet dance with Morpheus and remained there for some hours sleeping in the upright position. When Thomas awoke, he looked around the room and saw a loaf of Wonder Bread on one of the counters. Realizing he was hungry, he made his way to the refrigerator and opened the door. The fridge was full, but he just grabbed the first thing his hand fell on. Thomas closed the

fridge and began fixing himself a sandwich of Wonder Bread and A-1 Sauce, licking the extra sauce from the crust as it oozed from between the soggy slices of bread. He did this without relish, mechanically, because otherwise the sauce would have dripped onto the floor. As Thomas ate, he didn't think of anything. He didn't realize that the sandwich was void of all nutritional value, didn't think of the fact that there was fresh chicken salad (his favorite) in the fridge. He just chewed, concentrating on opening and closing his mouth, moving the bread about with his tongue, and swallowing. When he had finished, he saw that there was sauce on his fingers and rose to wash his hands. Upon turning away from the sink, he saw the open bag of Wonder Bread and the bottle of A-1.

After putting these items back where they belonged, Thomas walked around the apartment. He saw knickknacks and pictures of people, of him with people, of him alone, and a few of him with a woman, a beautiful woman. Despite his desperation for contact, Thomas found no solace in these pictures. They did not, as one might think they should have, send him scrambling to the phone to reach out to one of these acquaintances with the desire to speak, to express himself and find peace in the sympathy of one with whom he had spent much time and shared a similar mind. Rather, he doted on the picture of the woman. There were no feelings of tenderness, of love stirred by the photo.

"She's beautiful," he said aloud. In truth this was as far as it went. The woman in the picture was beautiful and he wanted her, so he stared. After a minute or so he placed the frame back on the shelf where it had been and stood for a moment looking around with his shoulders slumped and his hands hanging motionless by his side. In the corner of the room he saw a desk with many papers stacked and scattered about it. In the center of the desk was an old typewriter. Thomas made his way over to the desk and retrieved the piece of paper protruding out of the top of the typewriter from the clutches of the machine.

He read of a city. The writer was speaking of an epidemic that had robbed the inhabitants of what was described as "a once vibrant and passionate metropolis" of all will to live, of all desire, joy, pain, and sorrow. In its place, the writer said, was only a sense of futility, of absurd and inescapable boredom. These unfortunate souls could find no reason to do much of anything except eat and sleep. Thomas read of the government setting up a vast quarantine area that

comprised 1/3rd of the city. When people were determined to have the disease, they simply boarded a bus and rode to the quarantine. Here they were left with the other lost souls to twiddle away their days until absurd despair and unreasonable boredom caused them to waste away and die, the author presumed, from voluntary starvation. The last paragraph was a goodbye from the author. He was a journalist who could report no more. "Nothing else can happen here," he said. "These people have been taken from themselves and there is no longer a life to be lived in this city, much less one worth writing about."

Thomas put down the paper and walked to the window. As he looked out at the city, he thought about how it resembled the scene that the writer had described. He looked at the empty streets, the people shuffling about, doing nothing, the trash in the gutter, on the sidewalk, the perpetually gray sky. A breeze blew in through the window and he caught a whiff of his own body odor. How long must it have been since I've taken a shower, he thought. Thomas exited the shower in a hurry and rushed out of the bathroom with a towel barely clinging to his waist and water dripping all over the floor. He had thought he heard a voice in the apartment while he was in the shower and couldn't imagine who could be there. Finding the apartment empty, he walked to the window and looked down onto the street. He saw nine or ten people on the street, all walking in the same direction. Among them was the couple he had seen on his way into the apartment building.

What Thomas didn't know, what he couldn't realize at the time, was that the voice he heard was really an announcement on the PA system that was set-up throughout the city just after the start of the epidemic. The announcement itself was aired once a day and was the sole purpose of the PA system's construction. It asked all residents to walk to the closest bus stop and board a bus heading downtown.

This was the government's way of removing those infected with the Creep from the general population and getting them to the quarantine with the least possible trouble. The plan was almost savage in its simplicity. When the PA system was first installed, all people were notified of its purpose and the announcement to be aired each day. If one



"MACHINE HEAD" Andy Chipman

remained uninfected, he would naturally ignore the message and get on with his daily affairs, but if he were, well, that was the end. He would simply board a bus as told, and quietly take the ride downtown.

Just then Thomas heard a key hit the lock. Startled, his eyes began jumping around the room as if he were searching frantically for a place to hide. The woman from the pictures Thomas had found earlier stood in the doorway with a startled look on her face. She held a bag of groceries

in one arm and worked the key out of the lock with the other. The sense of alarm on her face quickly faded and was replaced with a sly look. She closed the door and placed the groceries on the counter. Thomas remained in the center of the room frozen, 1/2 naked, and surrounded by a pool of water. He was relaxed, and stared blankly at the woman as she walked slowly across the room. She swayed from right to left with each step-her eyes squinted, seductively surveying his wet, bare figure. She was talking the entire time, muttering short phrases through pursed lips and laughing. She stopped two steps from Thomas and hooked her thumbs in the belt loops at the back of her jeans, pulling them down a bit, and assumed the stance of a cowgirl. She was wearing a short tank-top and with her jeans pulled-down ever so slightly as they were, Thomas could not help but to glare at the bare skin below her belly button and the piece of red silk that slashed across her right hip-suggestive of the heat that lie beneath the cool exterior of her indigo stained jeans. Thomas was aroused immediately, but didn't realize the comic spectacle he made of himself wearing only a towel.

"What you got in mind for that pistol Tex?" the woman said.

"Huh," Thomas managed.

"What are you gonna do, big boy?" At that Thomas seized hold of her by the waist and pulled her to him, letting the towel fall to the floor. She kissed him; feverishly at first, and then softly, tenderly-finally trailing her tongue ever so lightly across his upper-lip before pulling back and taking hold of his hands to lead him into the bedroom at the rear of the apartment. She had turned him around and walked backwards, the entire time focusing on his eyes and staring adoringly. The whole affair was over in a matter of minutes. Thomas threw her onto the bed and took her from behind with near savage force. A moment later he fell on his back at her side, breathless, a dazed look on his face as he stared out the window. He fell asleep immediately and didn't stir until the sound of a car horn woke him the next morning.

He woke in a fright, his gaze flying around the room as if looking for something familiar, something that would give the place a name and a sense of location. He saw the naked body of the woman at his side. At first he was startled to see another there, but almost immediately another feeling

flooded his mind as his eyes stared greedily at the bare curves of her body. He pulled at the sheet that covered the lower half of her. She awoke very calmly. Focusing slowly on his face she muttered his name. "Oh Thomas," she said, and smiled. He was on top of her again. It wasn't the sort of sex one finds mentally enjoyable unless both partners decide on an air of deviance before hand. Thomas was going at it like an animal, the way one might if physical pleasure were all that mattered rather than emotional fulfillment. He was hard on her, throwing her about as he pleased and avoiding eye-contact. She tried to stop him for some time, succeeding only by screaming his name and pushing with all her might on his stomach.

"Thomas," she said imploringly; "Thomas," this time with concern. She reached up and felt his face with her fingertips, pulling back his long bangs and letting the sun fall across his face. "Oh no-baby... baby say my name... Thomas, please baby say my name." He made no reply, but sat staring down at her questioningly. She made her way out from underneath him and sat up. She remained still for a long time, staring down at a ring on her left hand. Eventually she rose and, without looking at Thomas, made her way into the bathroom. He watched her rise, gather some clothing from an armoire filled with women's clothes, and shut the bathroom door. He heard her sobbing over the sound of the water running within, but he remained on the bed, staring at the dust particles dancing just inside the window as if lost in a trance.

He was stirred by the sound of the PA system outside warming up, and about ten minutes later, he found himself waiting at a bus stop on a corner. Before boarding the bus, he read the name on its side: "Modern Dervish." As Thomas sat down in his seat, he caught the eye of a passerby. The man looked at him as Thomas had stared at the old couple he encountered in the hallway of his building the night before. "Wuff- The Modder," the man said to himself. As he said this, his eyes left Thomas and his whole body shook as if a shiver had run down his spine. He placed his briefcase in the other hand, retrieved his cell phone from his pocket, and continued down the street.

LET ME FORGET

Let me forget the plentiful supply of tears shed from the faces of the old soul
Let me forget the faces of twisted features, riddled with pain from disease
Let me forget the impairment, the malady that ate away at their lives
Let me forget the cries of loneliness of those deteriorated bodies, I once held in my arms
Let me forget the tears and prayers of the exhausted and spent souls of these aged
Let me forget their sleepless nights, in which no amount of compassion was suitable
Let me forget the echoing hallways with its pleading voices for death to grace them
Let me forget their glorious attempts of bravery to laugh and welcome eternal sleep
Let me forget those soft voices, which summoned kindness, with their last breaths to say
"Thank you"

Let me forget the uprising fear, I saw in their eyes of understanding their demise
Let me forget the feeling of surrender I once held tightly in my hands, as eternal slumber
was received
Let me forget my heavy heart for its losses in this world

I implore the quietness of my mind to seal itself from the haunting of these occurrences,
and the hours of wonder that I was all I could be

Yet, I cherish each of these aged souls, as if born of my own womb, God's gifts to me to
care for and share tenderness of heart

Would I have their memories, as their bodies wither from me, giving back the gifts that
were so graciously bestowed upon me from God

I should suffer more sadness at the loss of these enrichments of my life, than those that I
feel haunt my soul

Leave me then with my memories of these aged souls, of pain and impairment

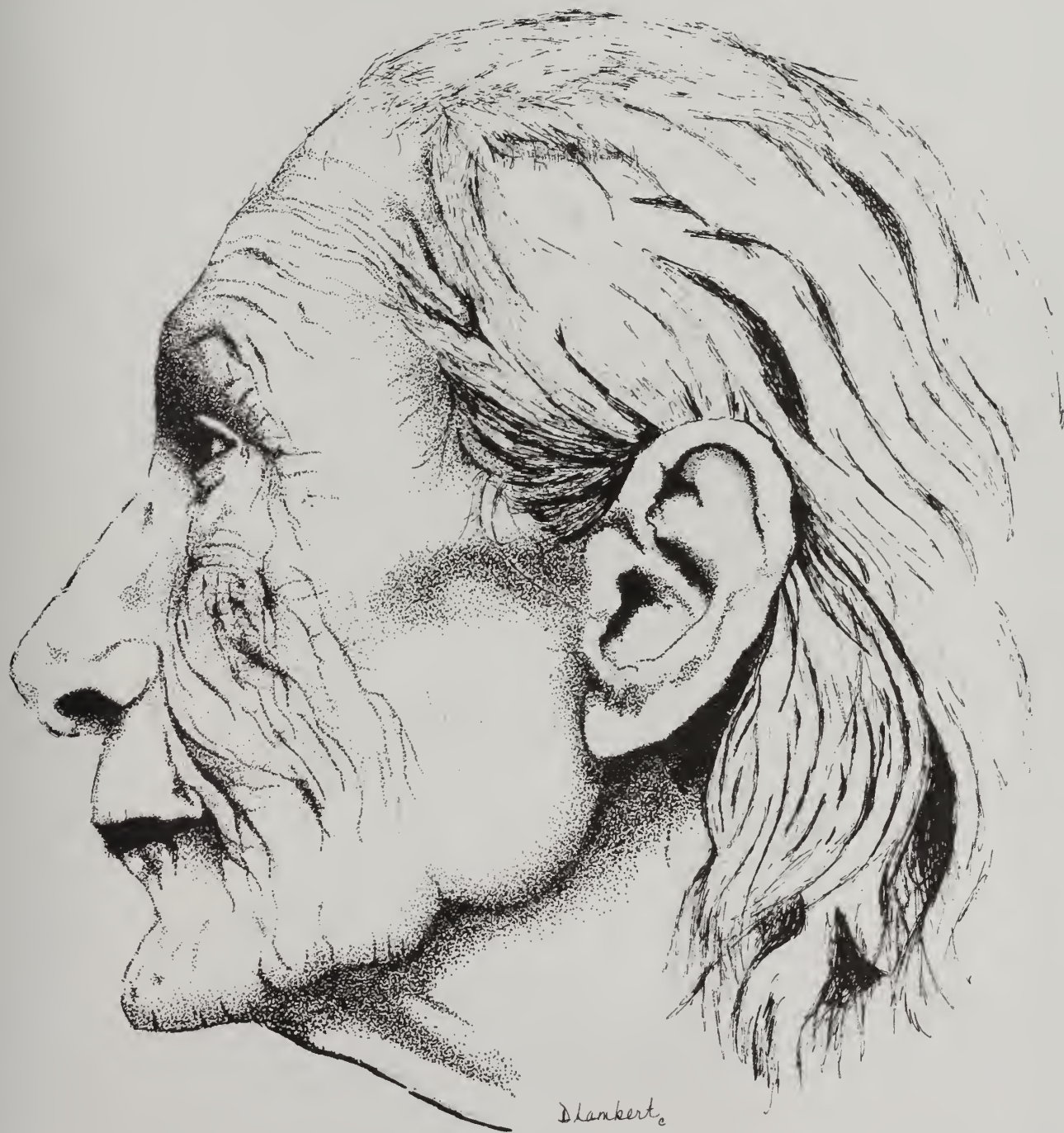
Leave me then to savor the moments of delight I was able to instill among them and they
upon me, be it a minute or a day

Leave me then to understand that this profession once chosen was to be my destiny, as no
other perhaps could endure and is the window to my own time yet to come

Leave me then to share with all these experiences bestowed upon me, in my life's
lessons, so that I might help others understand the words and actions of giving and
receiving

As I now see I have received in abundance much more than I have contributed

Donna Lambert



Donna Lambert

"A ROSE IS A ROSE" Andy Chipman



CHERRY BLOSSOMS

In a morning's splendor--
 Garnished with cherry blossoms--
 Kissed with diamonds of
 Condensed teardrops,
 Spring's totalitarian birth-rights--
 made a mockery as each virgin bud drops.

And a sultry wind,
 By cool months of longing heated,
 Inspires the descent--
 The reunion of fleshy palm and petal.

And all this flowing sadness
 Inspires vehemence and stagnation,
 A pool of scorched and swollen flowers--
 To be cast in gold,
 And made metal.

(James Kraeutler

AT THAT TIME

At that time...when I'm alone
 There are a few moments when the sorrow pours her cup.
 At that time...when the poured liquid fills the room of the soul
 When loneliness stops its chivalry,
 When the blind searches for the light, I for life,
 When the mute loves the word, I drink courage;
 When the camel searches for water, I sense the human love,
 At that time... I go out and ring the bell of melancholy!

Valbona Laudari Noirecka)



Chuck Lyle

TITLED

Wrapped in a sheer gauze
A fabric composed of self decomposition
I find myself reeling, looking for the falter in my step
While your sun drenched grin eats me alive

Where have you gone?

Abandoned the threshold of my grasp
Speaking only to feel the force of your breath
Here is where most would recoil
But I bask
Bask in the moment of your regret
Finding adoration for something.

Something so deliciously tragic.

"Oh where have you gone Lover?"

Soaked in regret that seeps from my thighs
Contaminated by the pollination of this petal
You have found yourself tainted
You no longer glisten, but are
Devoured by your own abstinence
Alienating yourself from the very cycle, which bred you.

It is here, in this moment that I bask
A breathing symbol, the creation of deconstruction.

(Sara * Beth Kevorkian

Lilla Collins



CLOUDY FIRE OF LIFE

The calming moon
And the cloudy fire of life
Strikes upon the earth
With a peacefulness and tingling interference
The certainty of life is unknown,
And can never be acquired.
As the thunder rumbles in the skies,
And the lightning crashes through the darkness
The fire of life becomes a still and smokey flame
And finally nothing remains but ash.

Erin Mulcahy



Amanda Miller



Maria Amézaga

DAWN

The bright light of the dawning sun
filters down, through the silvery clouds.
As the rays of early morning sunshine tumble
through the window,
illuminating our entwined bodies,
I awake
And smile, you look so calm and angelic,
breathing softly,
your handsome body enveloped in heavenly light.
I snuggle closer to your warmth, you mumble,
and wrap your arm around me.
Happily, I drift back to sleep, comforted,
encircled in your arms.

Jillian Harlow

COLORADO

sweet sunsets in golden hills slowly grow
into mighty peaks, which shatter the
definition of what nature is.
winds blow freshness across swaying
spines of yellow tundra in a unified dance
Radiant fields shining like the sun on and
around the face of a pure being.

Wanting and Needing
A vast desire running gaps deeply for understanding
All is made clear as the winds penetrate
Peace is to be sought after.

Aimee Murray

REPRODUCTION OF
BEAUTY OUT OF SHOWER:
GOA SI YONG Dena Smulski



REPRODUCTION UNTITLED:
WEN ZHEN MING Dena Smulski

PARNASSUS • Fall 2001



Kat left the balcony and stumbled through the party inside. Tears and booze blurred her vision as she made her way down the narrow corridor to the bathroom. Fumbling for the light switch in the dark, she almost fell over from dizziness and drunkenness. It shocked her when the light flickered on, but she recovered quickly and shut the door behind her.

She stood in front of the mirror and took in the image before her. Her dark hair was tangled and wet with spilled tequila; her face streaked with black trails of mascara. Dark circles had formed under her bloodshot eyes. She looked like she was about to star in the next sequel to *The Crow*. Her nose was running and her head was pounding.

Her hand shook when she reached for the medicine cabinet door. She thought she was looking for aspirin, until she saw the bottle and suddenly had no interest in it. Aspirin might make her headache go away, but it could not relieve her emotional pain. She was looking instead for a razor blade, a shining silver solution to her pain. She looked down at the old faded scars on her wrists. It would feel so good to open them again.

The four shelves of the medicine cabinet held toothpaste, soap, tweezers, and everything else that is normally in a bathroom, except a razor blade. She began frantically searching drawers and cabinets all over the small bathroom.

"What the hell is wrong with these people?" she thought. "Why don't they have a razor blade?"

Her eyes fell on the shower. She pulled back the curtain with anticipation. There it was. Her last hope, a lady Bic, a pink plastic safety razor with a moisturizing strip. She gripped the handle, running her fingers over the raised daisies on the side. They were sweet, innocent. Dragging the razor across her wrist, she looked down at the unbroken skin. Nothing. Not a scratch.

Her wrist was pale in the cold fluorescent light. One large blue pipeline, tiny tributaries darting off in every direction, taunting her. She pressed the razor to her wrist again, applying more pressure and thinking of him. He was drunkenly fucking some slut on the balcony. The last time, he swore he'd never cheat again. She believed him. She hated him for being able to destroy her, but hated herself more for letting him; another swipe and still no cut. If he were trying to kill himself, he'd probably use a big knife or drive his motorcycle off a cliff, something dramatic, rebellious, James Dean-ish. She was sitting on the cold tile floor of someone else's bathroom trying to slit her wrists with pink plastic daisies.



Zhana Levitsky

"Fucking pathetic." She spoke aloud, although the voice didn't sound like her own. She threw the razor across the room. It bounced off the wall clattering behind the hamper. She grabbed the corner of the sink and pulled herself up. Again she was staring at the Crow. She had to find Kat again.

She plugged the sink and filled it with cold water. It felt good when she submerged her face. The noise from the party muffled underwater. Opening her eyes, she caught a glint of silver through the blur. Pulling her face from the sink, she saw the ring he had given her sitting in the bottom. She didn't remember taking it off. She picked it up, drained the sink, and dried her hands and face. She looked like herself again. Placing the ring in her pocket, there was a knock on the door.

"Anybody in there man? I'm gonna hurl."

She opened the door allowing the drunk guy access to the toilet. He brushed past her and began to vomit. She closed the door and went back down the narrow hallway. In the living room she stopped to take four more shots of tequila then headed for the balcony.

She tripped as she stepped out. He was still fucking the slut in the corner. It felt like she'd been in the bathroom for an hour, but it must have only been ten minutes if he was still going. She leaned far over the railing and looked down the nine floors to the street. Her head was spinning. Flashes of every guy she'd ever been with created a montage on the pavement below. They had all hurt her and she'd let them.

"Kat, what are you doing?" he yelled as he stood, the slut falling off his lap to the floor. He rushed over to the railing to pull her back, ignoring that fact that the slut's hair had caught fire from a candle flame.

"What am I doing?" she said. "Well I was thinking about taking a fucking swan dive off the balcony. What are you doing?"

"What, her?" he said, pants still around his ankles. "She means nothing to me, just a drunken sport fuck. I didn't even know that you saw us. I love you." He pulled her close and tried to kiss her. She pulled away. "I'm sorry baby. I'll never do it again. She was a mistake."

"You promised me the last time that you'd never do it again. You said the last one meant nothing, that the last one was a mistake."

"I know baby, I know, but I really mean it this time. Honestly you are the only girl I want. I love you." He pulled her close again and this time she let him.

She pressed herself closer to him, breathing in his musky scent. For a moment she forgave him. She wanted to tell him that it was okay. She wanted to hold him forever. The slut got up to go inside and tend to her singed hair. Kat looked at this girl. She looked just like the others, a nameless girl who would never have to deal with all his bullshit. Jealousy raged inside Kat. She wasn't jealous that this girl had slept with him, only that this girl would never have to deal with him again. He would never talk to her again; he probably didn't even know her name. He could only hurt this girl once.

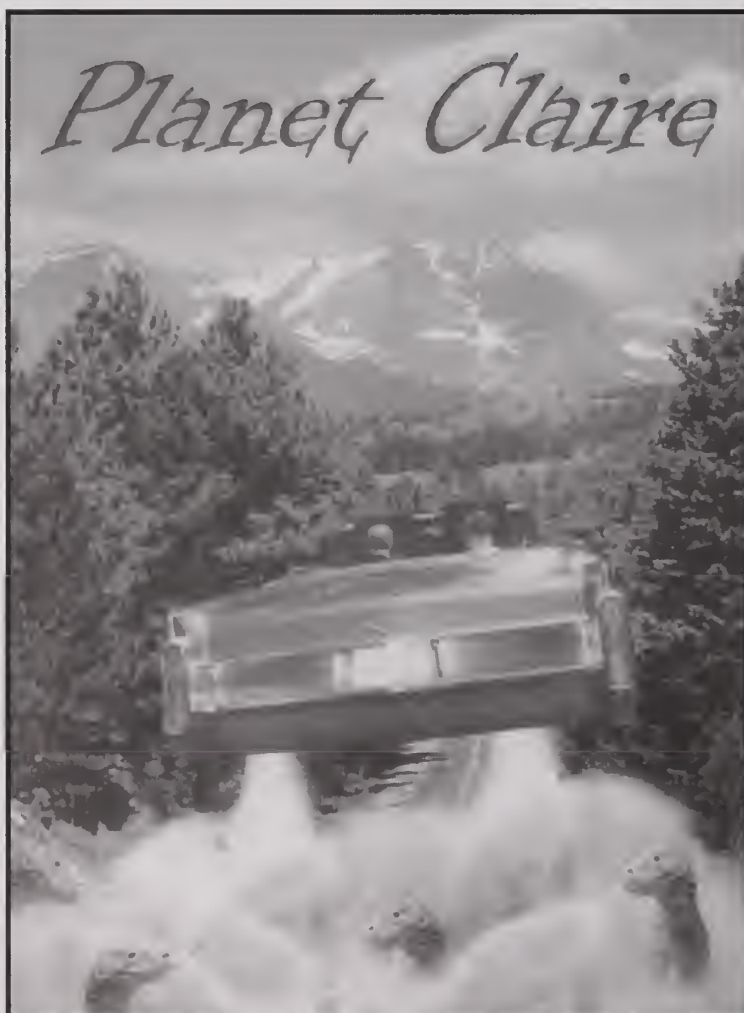
"Baby are we going to be okay?" he nudged her with his forehead as he always did when he was trying to be cute and get away with something. "I'll never look at another girl again."

She knew it was bullshit and normally she would have believed it anyway, but the pain from every asshole who had ever hurt her bubbled up at that moment, anger from every time he had said, "She was a mistake." Men had always had power over her. The power to make her happy or sad, the power to make her try to take her own life. She wanted to take something from him. Kat's hand reached into the front pocket of his hoodie and grasped something cold and hard. A feeling of power surged through her as she pulled it out.

"You were my mistake," she said, as she flipped open his butterfly knife in a fluid motion. "And hurting me was yours." She stabbed the knife into his inner thigh, twisting the blade so the wound wouldn't close. "I think I'll keep this; it may come in handy again someday." She pocketed the knife, threw his ring back at him and left him there on someone else's balcony, bleeding, with his pants around his ankles.



Michael Fluet



Thomas Auger

The ocean at night
 Is there any closer vision of infinity?
 The stars above, their reflections below,
 Each winking at their counterpart.
 As if a funhouse mirror has been held up
 To catch all of Creation in its view
 And Creation laughs, viewing itself
 Eye to watery eye
 Seeing its image stretch, warp, flow,
 An endless fluid dance, as partners,
 Sky above and sea below, both leading and following.
 How can any human soul,
 Upon viewing such a pair
 So different, yet so similar
 Locked in an eternal embrace,
 Flowing to a celestial song,
 How can any soul fail to be moved?
 How could any soul fail to dance,
 To join ocean and air in endless celebration?

Bryan Burns-Fedele)

The ocean was alive that night.
 The fog was crawling off it,
 impregnating our light clothes and hair.
 Ideas and thoughts ravaged the sand and surroundings,
 taking shots from the always exposed moon.
 I saw you standing near,
 but behind those dark eyes,
 they were soaring to far off planets,
 swirling with stories of other dimensions and stars intriguing.
 Your peculiar philosophies were absorbed
 by my sponging brain, throbbing with so many,
 yet dizzy from your breath of life.
 My brown hued sweater clung sticky to my body,
 alive with the mist.
 I reached over to touch the frigid taunting waves,
 laughing at our silliness
 and you smiled.
 The odor of merriment was thick,
 like tart honey.

(M. Karolyn Boudreault

Sara Figueiredo



ELSEWHERE

The night rips at our languor
Igniting passion we cast off
Our false skins and run with the wolves
Sinking in the grapes of
Reckless abandon and salty conquest
We lifeless drain its heady force
And are thus renewed
What light could our hearts release
What sign to quit our fevered hunt

(Dan Copeland

i can't be here with you just walk away turn my back
and just walk away no looking back heart in my throat
tears falling down my face need to just walk away my
love never spoken have to get away all bottled up
inside afraid to tell you how much i care i need to
get away too much pain you cause me emotions running
rampant taking over my life don't want to love you
can't stop don't know how to tell you have to get
away too much you make me feel i can't stop the
onslaught of emotions cascading through my veins my blood
my body my heart keeps pumping this love coarsely
throughout me seeping out my pores staring out my eyes
staring at you but you but you're not looking back you can't
see me blind to my love my heart unspoken desire
ripping me apart can't get away trapped by my feelings
my heart deserting me for you preventing my escape must
get away but can't leave without you

Carolyn Quinney



CHICK WITH
A GUN Andy Chipman



BIRCHES Cheri Beaumont

Brittle fingered hands
Of red and yellow wave
Excitedly to the sky
As its cool breath hurries past
Disrupting October's calm

Sister River crawls arthritic
To her death again
Leaving her children
To their own resources

A million voices silenced
By the stark pause that
Precedes rebirth

Last gasp of autumn wracks
The land with spasms

Far away, smoke rises

(Dan Copeland

STUFF N' THINGS

driven by the remnants of tomorrow
weeping only when you've loosened your grasp
i reject myself onto the bounty you've collected and wish
for something a bit less predictable
a bit less ordinary
only then will i fully reconcile with what i perceive

that realization, lifting me up
out of the bowels of perjury
enfolding the mystery before me
while i gaze entranced
by the beauty of its story

the mysticism holding me in place, like an abandoned wind-up toy.
i wait almost in wonder, almost in abhorrence.
not quite clean, not quite dirty
leaving my morals vacated like a sleazy motel.
and my thighs sweetened by the thought

this thing, this love
if you can call it that
has taken hold of me
trapped in its throes
a prisoner to its every whim
creating a slow-burning
 dementia
this thing this love
 my reality

unbridled tension splattered with my misgivings
you've pressed deeper than one would have wished
now i've become infected with the totality of the situation
with the fallacy of my misgivings
allowing the elation of my theory to rest

alone, emotions rampant
look at me, hear me
am i not
 what you
 wanted
not good enough, not pretty enough
 just not enough
see me, listen to me
 are you blind
or
am i just
 invisible

illuminating it all
every feature, every flaw
your breath only scorches when it should soothe
and solidifies my lips where it should soften
your breath, it leaves my lips dry and calloused
fragmented and poor
as for me
you have left me untainted for how you can
take away what was never there

alone, empty and hollow
just going through the motions
 invisible
was i ever there
 alone
 i don't even
 exist

DEVIL'S PLAYING CARD Norma Vitale



I wander falsely pretending it doesn't exist
A nightmare brings back to life all that hurt
In an instant I must see you
But you are nowhere, contrary to me seeing you everywhere
Ignore these feelings but can't deny my heart skip at your presence
Even your silhouette affects me the same
Barefoot over scorched sand
If I stare too long my peace devoured
My sanity of being together collapses
The alone invades me
Absence serves two masters
The aphrodisiac of the soul and
The blade that cuts
The blood is life
A figment of my imagination
The untruth of this truth
Murder comes easy to the wicked
Compassion at a much higher price

(Ken Samoisette



ALL OF FLESH & BLOOD Norma Vitale

REGRETS

Peering out from the shadows,
Across the street, I see what appears to be
A reflection of my past.
Young lovers whispering secrets
As young lovers often do.
She whispers something funny,
Her pretty eyes twinkling with merriment.
He throws his head back with a laugh and
Tightens his grip around her waist.
That could've been me.

Many years past seem to come rushing back.
I was once, like her, a pretty, young thing.
But time has not been kind.
Now I peer out from ghostly shadows
No more than a specter in the present.
She tilts her head closer to his
And listens to the dreams he has for their future.
A quaint little house with gingerbread trim,
A pretty little yard for the children to come.
That could've been me.

I strain to listen to their sweet lyrics of love,
To relive the feelings they evoke.
But time has taken its toll, I can no longer hear the whispers,
Now I stand on the sidelines alone,
My dismal presence, a mere apparition.
He gently takes her hand in his.
She shyly kisses his cheek, standing on tiptoes.
They continue on, out of my sight,
Steadily weaving their dreams into a life together.
That should've been me.

(Diana M. Bergeron



Jennifer Descheneau

SOME GIRL Tim Fichera



Oh yes. Ain't it a pity that the motive for almost every human action is slathered in a generous coating of egocentric, self-absorbent slime? Nothing is pure ... especially the human heart.

Therefore, people rarely do things out of the kindness of these pulsing slabs. There always has to be that true, ulterior motive. There always has to be the *slime*. Generally, this plasmatic varnish of sorts is a colorless substance, but when thick enough, its tint is certainly a relative to green. Not the green of a parakeet's fluff, or the color of rolling, morning-dew spangled hillsides that glisten softly in the light of a young day. It is the shade that stands as a black sheep to the emerald family... the pedophile uncle, the drug-addicted sister. A green that brings to mind the most pungent cases of rancid meat, leaking grease-traps, venereal disease, and the resonating cries of thirdworld children, stomachs imploding by lack of nutrition and intestines exploding with the ravishing onset of dysentery. On rare, visionary occasions, the light of truth will catch the slime in such a way that the green becomes momentarily apparent like a shimmering cesspool in place of an oasis. The sooner we can train our eyes to catch these *motive-concealing malfunctions* in which the brief twinkle of green reveals the impurity that is truth, the more apt we are to win the game.

Craig, just short of kneeling, prayed that no one would notice the slickness of the slime that covered him from the tip of his dirty blond cowlick to the rough of his heel. Embarrassed shame summarized his mental state. He was like a child who, feeling the hot dampness of a nightmarish accident between his legs, sought a sweatshirt to wrap around his waist. The only difference in Craig's case was that there was no sweatshirt large enough to cover his stains. Even if there were, he was not sure it would do any good.

This was the first time he had ever made dinner for Carlotta. The first time he'd ever purchased flowers for her. The first time he had ever even invited her over without his only intention being to delve into the sine wave curves that bulged her dresses in all the right places. It was a wonder she had put up with his cushionless insensitivity for the past five months. All her wistful, girlie waiting was leading up to this sensational evening, though. Tonight was a remarkable night in itself... *Carlotta will faint when she*

feasts her eyes on this get-up, thought Craig as he lit the scarlet candle in the center of the forcibly romantic table. It was, thus, ironic that his only intention tonight was to kill her.

The improvisational hum that escaped his clean-shaven throat served as a means of producing false cheer in his main circulatory organ. It worked with all the charm of classic self-deception as Craig felt a lift in his spirit and a temporary dismissal from the asphyxiation of the green slime. *What do I have to worry about?* He straightened the already perfect tablecloth and allowed his nervous energy to sweep him in to the hazel glow of his galley-style kitchen where a steaming crock of linguini alfredo patiently awaited its inevitable fate.

Time proved itself to be the predominant bastard as it dragged with the limpness of a cadaver. *Cadaver*. That reminded busybody Craig, ole boy, of the looming and untidy issue of *disposal*. He had not quite gotten to crossing the i's or dotting the t's. Thus, crossing the t's and dotting the i's was completely out of the question. Carlotta was coming to dinner and she was not leaving with a heave left in her pretty little chest nor a youthful sparkle in her singing eyes. *This was the matter of importance*, not the disposal of her lovely little carcass. Craig figured that in the moment of truth, when confusing and life-altering doses of shock and remorse would sabotage his emotional circuit board, the best decision would come to him instinctively as it always seems to for psychos on the big screen. Relying on that heavy assumption, he grabbed metal tongs to bring out to the salad bowl. He couldn't expect his charming little dinner guest to serve herself salad with a fork, *now could he?*

Then, she was there. All ringlets of brunette bounce and a small triangle of creamy neck, teasingly exposed behind a black, feathery scarf. The jittery sense of doom became amplified within him as he noticed, perhaps for the first time, the penetrating wisdom of her pseudo-starlet eyes. "Why, you shouldn't have gone through all this trouble, Craig," she cooed as she let him take off her evening coat. She was dressed as though she had expected more trouble than he had actually gone through, so her comment lost its validity right away and Craig hushed her with comforting clichés including "it was no trouble at all," and "it's only because you're worth it," and "I just don't think I've

been doing a very good job showing you that I care," and "I wanted us to have a special night," and "I'm lucky to have such a beautiful woman," and... Carlotta faked bashful gratitude, the words "Yeah, yeah..." pushing all the time to escape through the lips she held seductively pursed. It was obvious that the transparency of his obsequious routine had only intensified over the five-month period of their relations. Practically yawning, the throaty-voiced vixen collapsed back on the coach, remarking on how much her nostrils enjoyed his cooking. He quickly ushered her to the table and brought out the salad.

Tonging her way through the bowl of boisterous green, Carlotta neatly avoided every olive and cucumber. He should have known, after five months, that she wasn't fond of such vegetables, but, ah, there was much he never paid notice to. A sigh escaped her round chest and their eyes locked for an electric second. "I never knew you were so skilled at preparing meals. Any other secrets I should know about?" Coy, wispy flutters of lash took off like moths as she batted her lids.

"I think," Craig smiled slyly, "that one of the most important parts of a relationship is maintaining an element of surprise."

"Since when, praytell, did you become so interested in the importance of relationships?" She placed the tongs back in the bowl and looked up at him intently.

"Baby, you know I've always cared. *Wine?*" Without waiting for her answer, Craig plunged the twisted metal into the cork and thus dismissed the burdensome topic. What was the use? Carlotta could never let things be ... she always had to poke and prod her way to the end of his fuse. "Oh ... we need glasses." Bottle in hand, he retreated to the kitchen to pour the drinks. Already sensing where the conversation was leading this evening, Craig decided to get things done as quickly as possible. He was especially careful to remember whose drink was whose as he emptied the powder into her glass. It dissolved quickly when he swished the blood-blushed crimson around and around. He took the tainted liquor in his right hand and his own wine in the other. Flashing a five-cent smile and his irresistible cerulean peepers, he returned to his dinner guest. "Here you are, *darling*."

Her sips were timid, bringing back to Craig the fear that she might see his malicious intent. He brought his glass of burgundy to his lips for a healthy gulp, as though to set an example of how she should be drinking. Carlotta chose to ignore him and went right on munching at her salad. Silence consumed them long enough to cultivate the toe-curling seeds of awkwardness. Scarlet wax trickled down the side of the candle, and the flame danced nervously, as though apprehending the danger to come of the night.

Craig began to wish he had thought of background music. The crunches of mastication were driving him mad. Sneaking a peek at his girl's lovely stance - the calm concentration her slightly furrowed eyebrows displayed as she ate; the goading way her dress's v-neck directed his eye; the pink hue that livened her cheeks; - he wondered why it was not harder to kill such a beautiful creature. The guilt and fear spurred by the thought were existent but much less potent than one would imagine. He was actually becoming less and less nervous as time passed.

Seeing that the comely Carlotta was nearing the end of her salad, Craig retreated again to the hazel-lit kitchen, this time to serve the pasta. Unsure as to whether she would finish her wine, he spruced her linguini up a tad with the same virulent powder.

Conversation at the table remained absent, but the crooning of "ole blue eyes" softly filled the gap as Craig had taken a detour to the turntable on the way back from the kitchen. He was pleased to see her wineglass almost empty as she began in on the noodles. *Now came the wait.*

After two minutes: "So, do you enjoy my cooking?"

"It's delicious," Carlotta paused and, without looking up, added: "I know you only invited me over tonight to kill me."

And thus, Craig's greatest fear was now a reality. She'd known it all along ... she'd seen the pistachio shine. Carlotta was not just some stupid dame. Carlotta had intuition and hidden brains behind that cute-as-a-button peppermint face of hers. She'd known it all along. *But, no matter*, thought Craig as he eyed the now empty wineglass. *She was as good as gone anyhow.* He maintained his cool.

"Oh?" he popped out with a quirky innocence. "What makes you think that?"

She twirled her fork lugubriously. "What kind of fool do you take me for, Craig? I saw this day coming from light-years away."

"How?"

"You're not as subtle as you'd like to think, darling." Both continued on with their meals calmly, as though the brief spurt of conversation had been bingo hall small talk. The silence took on a slightly different flavor this time, though.

And Craig thought, for a freakish second, that held seen an unnatural glint of green in Carlotta's chocolate eyes ...

Taking her last noodle in between her pouty cerise lips, Carlotta set down her silverware and took a gun out of her purse. "I wasn't sure how you were intending to go about murdering me, but I thought I would come prepared." She batted her spider-leg lashes and pointed the barrel at Craig's chest. "I've been made a fool of by you for too long, sweetheart. But tonight, *I'm prepared.*"

He knew she would shoot him. There was no doubt in even the dankest, most cobweb-ridden corners of his mind that she would not. It was piteously ironic that the tables should turn in such a dreadful manner. Here Craig had been, shameful and frightened that Carlotta would notice the stain of his true motivation and then she has the nerve to go and show up with a gun in her pocketbook. Now he knew he had not imagined the change in the clever girl's eyes. Who would have guessed? He wanted to pull a daring move like flipping the table on her or slapping the weapon from her delicate hands. These were only fantasies though. *Hollywood illusions.* His assumption that he would know how to bravely and instinctively react in such a tight place proved to be false. Not even worth a try. His goose was cooked. This was checkmate. Craig was mature enough to accept that.

Carlotta was amazed at how calm she felt, with the gun poised at his chest. "Goodbye Craig. Sorry to foil your plans, my dearest one." The scent of gunpowder and an eruption of carmine from his chest; Sinatra singing something about witchcraft in the background; the smoking

barrel in her trembling fingers; a fleeting expression of shock in Craig's sewage green eyes ...

Clawing at his gushing wound before collapsing to his undignified death, Craig managed to blood-spittingly stammer: "*Did your wine taste strange?...*"

Interestingly enough, poison never seems to take effect until the victim realizes that he/she has just consumed it. Following the realization is widened-eye terror, an onset of pitiful, sputtering chokes, the customary clutching of the throat (even though the stomach is where the fatal reaction is occurring), and finally, the immediate thereafter death

It is a tidy and predictable method of murder. Carlotta herself was not exempt from this traditional series of events. The buxom brunette crumpled to the finished wooden floor in an unattractive heap. There was neither a heave left in her pretty little chest nor a youthful sparkle in her singing eyes.

The investigators figured it was a double homicide. The man poisoned his girl for one reason or another. Maybe she was fooling around on him. Maybe it was over money or some other petty domestic dispute. Who knows? His choice of toxin suggested that this was a planned out murder; *Oxydine Chloristrych* is not, after all, an everyday household item. Before it consumed her, the broad took a sure shot at her beau's chest. That's when the downstairs neighbor called the authorities. It is yet to be determined to whom the gun belonged. Tragic case, really. Very messy. Pretty obvious though.

The only thing that has the police left baffled is the origin of a slimy, green, mucous-like matter found on the gun, the wineglass, and the packet containing the poison. It will be sent to a laboratory for further testing.

TIRE Catherine Murphy



DEDICATION

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED TO THE
VICTIMS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

A BOMB DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE

A bomb does not discriminate
It is not racist
Or sexist
It doesn't care about age
Or innocence
Or guilt
It kills murderers
It kills supporters
It kills protesters
It kills innocent civilians
It kills anyone in its path
Why is the one thing that looks past race, sex, age,
and everything else,
The same thing that will kill you without looking
back?

(Erin Mulcahy

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